

[Mr. Eugene McCrohan]

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Range-Lore

Ruby Mosely

San Angelo, Texas.

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RANGE-LORE

Mr. Eugene McCrohan came from Ireland to Chicago in the early 40's and his wife Mrs. Isabelle Wilson McCrohan came from Scotland. They pioneered through all the states from Illinois to New Mexico, escaping wild animals and depredating Indians, as New Mexico seemed the wildest, that was the chosen place for settlement. The family increased several in number, Mr. Dave McCrohan was one of the younger children.

"I was only two years old when we moved to Texas and settled in the Concho Country but I have a good recollection of the men quarrying rock to build Old Fort Concho", says Mr. Dave McCrohan of San Angelo, Texas. We located just below the old Butterfield mail station. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 When the fort was completed and the soldiers were stationed in the fort my father furnished them with milk from his dairy. There were a number of soldiers' families living near here when I came. The permanent families consisted of Frank Tankersley, Jim DeLong and the [Burltson?] family. Frank Tankersley came three years before I did.

"There was no towns , with the exception of country stores stores, closer than San Antonio. Menard, and Fort McKavett had a Government Store, the same as Fort Concho. There was no San Angelo in those days but a little later W. F. Veck put up a saloon in a

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big tent where San Angelo is today. Ben Ficklin town did not exist, it was a farm worked and plowed by Ben. There were no schools nearer than San Antonio. So you can imagine what ignorance and hardships existed in those pioneering days.

"Indians were still depredating this Concho area when we moved here , so we built a log house with a dugout beneath it to sleep in for protection from the redskins which made several attacks. When they came the first one that saw them shouted, 'The Indians are coming!' We ran for the dugout as you have seen wild animals run at the sight of a gun or dog. Father always got the gun and when it was fired they made their get-a-way. If father was gone when the attack was made mother mustered the gun, to make believe durable protection, then father always found us safe and secure on his return.

"I remember one time my father was alone during one of the raids, he shot several times and killed one Indian and probably others . The old custom of theirs was to take the 3 dead with them. I guess they wanted to save the scalp. They did not get the horses this time.

"The Indians made another attack, their motive was always to get the horses. This time no damage was done except killing our dogs. One dog had two arrows through his stomach, while the other was struck by one arrow. We boys grieved over this as much as if it had been the horses.

"The Indians really put one by us one night. My father and Mr. Jerry Schade tied our horses just as thick as they could stick around in a circle and made their bed in this circle. They told my brother and me to go up on the hill to sleep. That night the Indians came, got every dad- blasted one of our horses, and put a jackass in the stockades. Not one of us woke up. This was really a neat job, you don't know how we felt that morning when we were awakened by the braying of the donkey.

"There were lots of little mustang ponies but they weren't worth nothing, so we never cotched them. Horse traders came through the country once in a while, let's see, we bought old Jerry, Blue Dog, Diamond and old Grey, that's about as many horses as we

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kept as long as Indians were raidin'. We only had about thirty or forty sections of land leased from the government and didn't need many horses.

"One time a man was coming to our ranch and got a little drunk on his way. The Indians killed him, drank the remainder of his whisky and placed the bottle on his breast after taking his scalp. The soldiers went out but didn't catch the Indians. The last hostile Indians were seen in about 1875. The Indians 4 rated according to the number of scalps they collected. The chief always had more than the others.

"Carrol McKinsey was the best commander the fort ever had. He commanded in 1872 and sent four or five hundred Indians out on reservations; he got most of them from Yellow House Canyon, a canyon between here and New Mexico.

"In the late seventies we had negro soldiers here; they didn't do no good, the Indians called them buffalo soldiers. The citizens and negro soldiers had a few little scrapes, one or two negroes were killed but no whites.

"Oh yes, I have killed lots of buffaloes, big and little. Whenever we needed meat we killed one, just as you would kill a rabbit, chicken, hog or any other animal food, except the buffaloes were a lot larger and they were not harmful to man. I guess we would have plenty of them here today if the hunters had not come in and killed them for their hides.

"I've been up the trail many, many times, I guess my longest trip was from here to Leavenworth, Kansas. Me and my two brothers and eight or nine cowboys would take from twenty-five to thirty thousand head of cattle each trip. We would rig up our chuck wagon with supplies to last as long as possible. We always started the cook on ahead so that he could have our food prepared by the time we got there, then no time would be lost. He would have to choose a place to camp where there was plenty of grass and water so our cattle might graze as we ate. The same procedure was followed throughout the journey then we usually covered ten or twelve miles each day. If the herd got restless we would always sing to quiet them; a stampede 5 was often prevented by the singing cowboy.

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When we camped for the night we each had our duties to perform. Some were to hobble horses while others bedded the cattle, there were guards for the night, three alternating their duty. If trouble came, such as a stampede, wild animals or storm, every one reported to duty except the cook. Many cattle were often lost during the disturbance. One time a little wind and cool rain came up which resulted in a stampede. I was in the lead and gave my horse the reins to do his stuff; he stumbled in a hole which sent me over his head to the ground, I looked up, saw the cattle coming. I disrobed my slicker, began shaking and whirling it into the air; this turned the cattle, and was all that saved me and my horse from being stamped into the earth.

"When going up the trail it was customary to give a beef to the owner if you crossed his property, we always did this and made friends all the way up. This was pretty nice on the way back we were often invited to eat some of that beef and drink black coffee. People were so few in those days they didn't forget you.

"I really had a time with the wildest horse I ever rode. It took me five years to ride old Blue Dog. He was really mean but I rode him twenty-five years and I never rode him a time that he didn't buck. He pitched and bucked until he died; sometimes I wonder if he didn't pitch a little afterward.

"We went back to New Mexico in 1885; we liked that country, the wooded hills and big ranches, but could not stand the superiors being of Mexican people. In fact the whole business was controlled by Mexicans, so we moved back in 1896. There was quite a change in this country during those few years I was away.

"I know most of the old timers, good or bad, we didn't have such a distinct social line as the society people of today, we were all just plain common folks.

"Yes, I knew Old Booger Red, he was one of the ugliest guys I ever saw but lots of fun. I have seen him ride the wildest bronchos that ever was mounted. My brother brought a wild horse out of the mountains in New Mexico; he was as swift as lightning. Old Booger Red

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rode him at the Fair. Me and my family being interested in the horse and knowing Booger, dressed up, got in our new hack and went to the Fair as a big dog in a little wagon, style. Just as we drove up we saw Old Booger Red riding that New Mexico horse without a bridle, boy , he was just a bucking, pitching, rearing and pawing at the sun and over the fence he came tumbling and cav orting cavorting right in front of us. Our horse got scared, reared up and fell back on our new hack and killed himself and it scared the very devil out of my family, but none of us got hurt. Booger said, 'Well I guess I'm so ugly I scared the horse to death'. The Fair Committee wanted to pay me \$60.00 for my horse but I wouldn't accept it because I thought my horse was worth \$100.00 and I rather have nothing than to have my horse valued at \$60.00.

"I know some of the so- called outlaws; Dave Adkins killed a man, then deserted his family to escape punishment. This all led him to train robbing which was the most popular robbing during that age. 7 Tom and Sam Ketchum were train robbers and outlaws and would get hungry while on a hide out, and slip up to a sheep camp to get food. Once we were all at a picnic and some one came and told the Ketchum girl that Tom had been shot; this didn't seem to worry her, after the picnic was over she stayed for the dance that night. It was told around that Tom had been captured and hanged in New Mexico, but I don't agree with them. They sent for his brother to identify the body and hanged a dummy, pulled his head off as the trap fell, and refused to let anyone see him. [Roue?] Shields said he saw the Governor of New Mexico and Tom back at Tom's old place, Knickerbocker, looking for his hidden money. I have seen men that said he lived in Old Mexico long after the hanging. These Ketchum boys worked on our ranch two years and made good dependable ranch hands at the time.

"Dick Duncan, another Knickerbocker product, robbed an old man and woman, then killed them and threw them in the Rio Grande River. He scouted around for awhile, doing several other law breaking acts which resulted in a hanging at Kerrville."